[749] b) The Cherkess and Abkhaz

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The Cherkess are called Kerketai, Kerketioi, Kerketaioi, Syndyi, Zygoi, Zinchoi by the Latin and Greek authors of antiquity; the Abkhaz are called the Apsil by Pliny (29 to 70 A.D.) and Arrian (100 to 160 A.D), Ap'šili and Ap'sari in Georgian chronicles: Abkhazia was dependent on Georgia during the first few centuries after Christ and afterwards on Lazia; in 786 it became an independent kingdom and was united again with Georgia by Bagrat III (980 to 1014) by marriage. Later it again achieved independence under the house of Shervashidze until the Russians occupied it, first the southern part, Samurzakhan, in 1845, and the rest of Abkhazia in 1863. The Cherkess are supposed to have occupied the northern foreland to a point beyond the Kuma, but later [750] [Fig. 441 appears here] to have been pushed back over the Terek, the Kuban, and the Malka rivers by the Tatars and, since 1777, by the Russians. As a result of the Tatar pressure the Cherkess tribes along the coast of the Black Sea had moved from there in the fourteenth century and pushed in among the Nogai, Karachi, and Taulu, in the Kabarda district, from which they derive their present name. After the suppression of the revolt in Dagestan and, in the autumn of 1864, the decisive defeat of the Cherkess, who had been offering stubborn resistance for decades, most of them, over 400,000, emigrated together with many Abkhaz, including the entire Ubykh tribe, to Asia Minor, Syria, and the Balkan peninsula.

[751] The Abkhaz (see Fig. 441) are physically of medium height, powerful build, and wiry. The skull

3: Janashia I-5 (ca. 1900) 1937 RI3 Abkhas RI3
Adzvibzha

already collected for the writing of a full-size monograph dealing with the religious beliefs and customs of the K'art's, Ibers, and Svans. However, after some reflection I decided that the time was not ripe for such a task as some necessary data were lacking and I therefore decided to publish only the notes. Here and there, however, I have not been able to restrain myself from touching upon certain considerations and inquiries belonging to the larger plane, and these have overflowed in the form of footnotes.

The founders of Christianity, realizing that it was not so easy after all to eradicate from the consciousness of the majority of the population religious beliefs and rites observed for thousands of years, endeavoured to transform them, by wrapping them up in their own clothing and so adapting them to the Christian feasts and saints; thus they established their own annual festivals. Wherever possible I have followed in my account the established order of church festivals.

I should further point out that all the material herein described was collected in one village only, namely, Adzvibzha, in southern Abkhasia (the province of Abzhua), which, according both to Georgian and foreign (for instance, of the missionary A. Lamberti) historical sources constituted until the second half of the seventeenth century, part of Megrelia. This accounts for the fact that the Megrelian influence is so strongly noticeable. I think it is quite possible that some of the beliefs herein described may be capable of a different interpretation in Northern Abkhasia.

I begin my notes with Àyt'ar. In the first place, however, it will be expedient to explain my views on the chief deity *antswd*,* God.

Antswd is a compound word, consisting of *an*, "mother," and *tswa* (*ratswd*)—"many," which together denote "many mothers" or simply "mothers"; the word is thus in the plural form.[1] "In a formal or grammatical sense," says Dcharaia, "it is not an error; only the word 'mother' forms in the plural *antswa* and 'God'—*antswd*, i.e. the difference is in the accent. But in colloquial speech both words,

* The underlined *tsw* is a trigraph representing a sound uttered with one articulative effort or breath impulse, of which the digraph "*ts*" represents the front lingual affricate equivalent to German "*z*" (*Zeit*, time), and the labial semi-vowel "*w*", the labialization of the preceding "*ts*". "*Tsw*" thus represents a labialized variety of "*ts*". See N. Y. Marr, *The Abkhasian Analytical Alphabet* (in Russian), Leningrad, 1926, p. 31. [Translator's Note.]

[1] It would be premature at this stage to enter into the question of the identification of the conception "god", in Abkhasian, with "mother", and any attempt to give a morphological explanation of the form, which is incontestably the plural in *-tswa*, with the aid of the Abkhasian word *ratswa* would be superfluous (see N. Marr, *Definition of the Language of the Second Category of the Achaemenian Cuneiform Inscriptions* (in Russian), in *Zapiski* (Bulletin) of the Eastern Branch of the Imperial Russian Archæological Society, St. Petersburg, 1915, §62. See also his *On the Origin of the Name Anapa* (in Russian). It is the usual linguistic method of the Abkhasians to interpret everything, even suffixes, such as the plural termination *-tswa* in the above instance, by means of the Abkhasian speech, with the aid of the Abkhasian words that survive to this day. [Note by the Editor of the *Kristianskii Vostok*.]